



Bishop FERN's
CHURCH of ENGLAND-Man's
REASONS
For not Making the
Decisions of Ecclesiastical
SYNODS
THE
RULE of his FAITH. &c.



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T H E
CHURCH of ENGLAND-Man's
R E A S O N S

For His not Making the
Decisions of Ecclesiastical
S Y N O D S

T H E
R U L E of His F A I T H.

By the Right Reverend Father in G O D,
H E N R Y F E R N E, D. D.
Lord Bishop of Chester: 1662.

In Matters of *Opinion* and *Credibility*, or of *Discipline* and *Rites*, which the Church determines and proposes for such, as there's more Cause for ready *Conformity of Judgment*; so's there more Security, or less Danger in it. — Only *this Conformity* is yielded still with a *Reservation* for any sufficient Evidence or Demonstration of Truth to the contrary: — for here's the Difference of *Conforming* in the former Points of *Catholique Faith* or *Worship*, to of high Concernment to our Souls; and these latter of *Opinion, Discipline, Rites*; that when the former are proposed to our *Belief* and *Practice*, we rest not secure till we have Demonstration or Evidence that they are so; but in the other we submit with Security till we have Evidence that they are not so as Authority hath determined. *Certain Considerations of present Concernment touching this Reformed Church of England, &c.* p. 20, 21.

L O N D O N:

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St. James, 1717.

To Mr. —

SIR,



THE following REASONS are faithfully extracted from two Books, written by the eminent Prelate whose Name I have plac'd in the Title Page. The one entituled, *Of the Division between the English and Romish Church upon the Reformation. By way of Answer to the seeming plausible Pretences of the Romish Party.* London, Printed for R. Royston, at the Angel in Ivie Lane. 1652. The other, *Certain Considerations of present Concernment touching this Reformed Church of England; with a particular Examination of An. Champny, (Doctör of the Sorbon) his Exceptions against the Lawfull Calling and Ordination of the Protestant Bishops and Pastors of this Church.* London, Printed by J. G. for R. Royston, &c. 1653. In an Age where 'tis so common for professed Christians to have the Faith of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the Lord of Glory, with respect of Persons; and not so much to consider what is said, as who the Man is that says it, I thought it might not be improper to reprint what this Excellent Person has said concerning the *Authority of the Church, and Private Judgment.* Some perhaps who will not so much as hear the present Living Pastors, may possibly regard the Reasons of this Dead one. I must not here conceal that his Lordship was one of those Learned Men who favoured the Hypothesis of a *silent Submission* to the Decisions of the Church

where we cannot acquiesce inwardly to that which is
pounded. But he restrains this silent Submission to
Cases, and is very express that to all the Determinations of
Church we owe Submission by Assent and Belief, [nor Ab-
lute, but,] Conditional, and Preparatory, at the least, which
given with Reservation for Evidence out of God's Word. I can
not, at present, assent to his Lordship's Determination, That
our Judgment and Reason as it is a Light to shine outward
Direction of others, so it may be concealed. Our Reason
Understanding is one of those Talents with which GOD
has entrusted us; and it is entrusted with us for that End
that we should Use it for our Lord's Advantage, and not
hide it in the Earth, or wrap it up in a Napkin. It is in-
deed possible that Christians may not only be Unprofitable
but Mischievous Servants; they may employ their Judgment
and Reason to do Hurt instead of doing Good. But this is a
Abuse of their Trust, and a Misemploying the Talents which
GOD has given them. Thus the Apostle supposes, that
even the Pastors of the Church may be lifted up with Pride
1 Tim. iii. 6. that they may turn aside unto vain Jangling
1 Tim. i. 6. that they may dote upon profane and old Women's
Fables, chap. iv. 7. may encourage doubtful Disputations
Rom. xiv. 1. may fool about Questions and Strifes of Words
whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmising, perverse
Disputings, 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. In short, that they may strive
about Words, to no Profit of the Hearers, but instead of nourish-
ing them up in the Words of Faith and good Doctrine, subverting
them, and leading them into the Snare of the Devil, 2 Tim. ii.
14, 26. The ancient and modern Theological Disputes are
many of them, so many Evidences of the Truth of what the
Apostle here supposes. And I wish I could not say, That
too many of the Decisions of our Ecclesiastical Synods
favour of the same Spirit, the being lifted up with Pride,
and being wise above what is written. And what has been the
Consequence? Has it not been this, That the Disputing on,
and Determining foolish and unlearned Questions which
have been started by Men who doted on their own fancied
Abilities, and were fond of Singularity, have occasion'd Strifes,
and Sects, and contributed to an Inundation of Ungodliness?
It is certain then, that our Judgment and Reason, as it is a
Light to shine outward for direction of others, so it ought to be
used by all Christians, who are as a City set on an Hill, and
whose Light is not to be put under a Bushel, but to shine be-
fore Men, Matth. v. 14, 15, 16. for that purpose. And were

it but so used ; would Christians in Things questionable and not plainly determin'd in Scripture be content with what is revealed, and not pretend to know with an infallible Certainty what G O D has been pleas'd not plainly to determine, there would be no Occasion for moving this Question, Whether or no private Christians are *silently* to submit in some Cases to the Determinations of their Ecclesiastical Governors, altho' they are inwardly satisfied of the Falseness of them ? Since, to speak the Truth, these * *Spiritual Guides*, who assume to themselves a Power, whether singly by themselves, or collectively in a Synod, to dermine such *questionable Things*, and not plainly determin'd in Scripture, and to require others to submit to their Decisions, make use of a Power which G O D has no where given them ; and consequently, no Obedience, or Submission of any Kind is due to them in the Exercise of such an Authority. It seems too much like Hypocrisy to be *silent* ; and *forbear to publish our Judgment to others*, when we do *not acquiesce inwardly to that which is propounded*. For tho' I readily grant that I am under no Obligation to publish to the World *my particular Judgment or Opinion* : Yet if the Church, or her Bishops and Pastors, of which I profess my self a Member, will take upon them to make *particular Opinions* the Terms or Conditions of her Communion, I do not see how it is at all reconcilable with *Sincerity*, for me to profess my self of Her Communion, and *silently* to submit to Her *Decisions* in such particular Points, to which I do not *inwardly acquiesce*, or rather which I am satisfied are false. Suppose, for Instance,
any

* This was the received Sense of these Words in the xxth Article of Religion, [*The Church hath Authority in Controverses of Faith*] in Thomas Rogers's time 1585, By the Church was not then understood, the Bishops or Clergy only, exclusive of the faithful People, but together with them, This Fancy, That the Mysteries of Religion are committed to the Trust of Bishops ; That the Common and faithful People have none Authority to examine any Doctrine in particular from the very Causes and Grounds, and thereby search out what is true, what false ; That this they must leave to the Masters of the Churches, to whom properly it belongeth, is noted by M^r Rogers among the Errors opposite to the Truth intended to be established by the Article. The Papists, says he, publish and hold, That " the Power to judge of Religion, and Points of Doctrine is either in Bishops only, as some of them do think, or in their Clergy only, as others deem. "

any Church should make the Belief of the *Pre-existence* of Souls, or the *Existence* of them in a *separate Place* after their *Separation from the Body*, neither in *Heaven* or in *Hell*, some of the *Articles of Religion* to which I am to declare my *unfeigned Assent*, If I do not *acquiesce inwardly* to those *Opinions*, can I ever be cleared from the *Charge of Dishonesty*, in *silently*, or *quietly submitting* to make such a *Declaration*? But it seems the *Tendency* of such *Doctrine* and *Positions*, as affirm that the *Governors* of the *Church* have no *Authority* to require a *silent Submission* to whatever *Opinions* they think fit to propound, is to *subvert all Government and Discipline* in the *Church of CHRIST*, and to *reduce His Kingdom to a State of Anarchy and Confusion*! As if there could be no *Order and Discipline* in the *Church* without her *Pastors* taking upon them to establish what *Opinions* they please; and *absolutely*, or *finally* to judge and condemn Men for their not embracing them. The same *Consequence* do the *Papists* fix on our *Denying* that the *Pope* has any *infallible*, or *unappealable Authority*, &c. In the Year 1686 was published by his present *Grace of Canterbury*, *An Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England in the several Articles proposed by Monsieur de Meaux late Bishop of Condom*, &c. p. 79. his *Grace* thus expresses himself: "Tho' we suppose the *Scriptures* are so clearly written, that it can very hardly happen, that in the necessary
 " *Articles of Faith* any one Man should be found opposite to
 " the whole *Church* in his *Opinion*: Yet if such an one
 " were evidently convinced, that his *Belief* was founded upon the undoubted *Authority* of *GOD's Holy Word*, so far
 " would it be from any *Horror* to support it, that it is at this
 " day the greatest *Glory* of *St. Athanasius*, that he stood up
 " alone against the whole *World* in *Defence* of *Christ's Divinity*,
 " when the *Pope*, the *Councils*, the whole *Church* fell away." This the *Vindicator* of the *Bishop of Condom's Exposition* styles an *intolerable Doctrine*, and thus exclaims, pag. 103.
 " Behold here, says he, a *Doctrine* which if admitted, will
 " not only maintain all the *Dissenters* that are, but that
 " ever can be from a *Church*; a *Doctrine* which will establish as many *Religions* as there are *Persons* in the
 " *World*; every one of which may, if he be but evidently
 " convinced (that is, if he have but *Impudence* enough to think he is so) that his *Belief* is founded upon the undoubted
 " *Authority* of *GOD's Word*, not only oppose the whole
 " *Church* but glory in it." To this his *Grace* replies, "These indeed, says he, are very ill *Consequences*, but such as do

“ not directly follow from this Doctrine as laid down in
 “ my *Exposition*. For 1st, I allow of this Dissent or Oppo-
 “ sition, only in *necessary Articles of Faith*, where it is every
 “ Man’s Concern and Duty, both to judge for himself, and
 “ to make as sound and sincere a Judgment as he is able :
 “ And 2ly, As I take the *Holy Scriptures* for the *Rule*,
 “ according to which this Judgment is to be made, so do I
 “ suppose these *Scriptures* to be *so clearly written*, as to
 “ what concerns *those necessary Articles*, that it can hardly
 “ happen that any one Man, any serious and impartial En-
 “ quirer, should be found *opposite to the whole Church in his*
 “ *Opinion*.”

“ NOW these Two Things being supposed, That in
 “ *Matters of Faith*, a Man is to judge for himself, and that
 “ the *Scriptures* are a clear and sufficient Rule for him to judge
 “ by; it will plainly follow, That if a Man be evidently con-
 “ vinced upon the best Enquiry he can make, that his
 “ particular Belief is founded upon the *Word of GOD*, and
 “ that of the Church is not ; he is oblig’d to support and
 “ adhere to his own Belief in Opposition to that of the Church.
 “ And the Reason of this must be very evident to all those
 “ who own, not the Church, but the *Scriptures*, to be the
 “ ultimate Rule and Guide of their Faith. For if this be so,
 “ then *individual Persons* as well as Churches, must judge of
 “ their Faith, according to what they find in *Scripture*. And
 “ tho’ it be highly useful to them, to be assisted in the mak-
 “ ing of this Judgment by that Church, of which they are
 “ Members ; yet, if after this Instruction, they are still evi-
 “ dently convinc’d, that there is a Disagreement in any *neces-*
 “ *sary Point of Faith*, between the Voice of the Church, and
 “ that of the *Scripture*, they must stick to the latter rather
 “ than the former, they must follow the Superior, not In-
 “ ferior Guide.”

“ AND however this Method may through the Ignorance
 “ or Malice of some Men, be liable to some Abuse ; yet cer-
 “ tainly, in the main, it is most Just and Reasonable, and most
 “ agreeable to the *Constitutions of the Church of ENGLAND*,
 “ which does not take upon her to be *Absolute Mistress* of the
 “ Faith of her Members, but allows a higher Place and
 “ Authority, to the Guidance of the *Holy Scripture*, than to
 “ that of her own *Decisions*.”

BUT this Doctrine seems now to be forgotten by some
 Men among us. Since to assert, That *Christ is the sole Judge*
 of Mens Behaviour in Matters relating purely to Conscience or
 Salvation ;

Salvation ; That no one — hath Authority to Judge, Censure, or Punish Men in such Matters: That the more close and immediate Christians Regard is to CHRIST, the more certainly and evidently true it is, that they are of His Kingdom; is it seems to say, that there is no Government and Discipline in the Church, nor any Regard to be paid by Christians to their Spiritual Teachers and Pastors. Certainly if every private Christian is obliged to allow a higher Place and Authority, to the Guidance of Holy Scripture, or of CHRIST JESUS, than to that of the Church, than the more close and immediate their Regard is to CHRIST, the more certainly they belong to Him. Since His is the only Infallible and Unappealable Authority. The Decisions of His Ministers, their Judgments or Censures, as they may be all of them erroneous; so may any Christian Appeal from them to the Judgment of their Lord and Master, who is the only appointed Judge to try Men by His Gospel, Acts x. 42. 2 Tim. iv. 1. But can there be no Government, where there is no absolute Authority to interpret Laws, or to decide doubtful Opinions? Can there be no Discipline, without Unlimited, Unconditional Submission to the Dictates of mere Authority? Can there be no Order unless the Members of the Church be oblig'd to profess for Truths, or however to Silent Submission, and that too under Ecclesiastical Penalty and Censure, whatever the Governors of the Church shall determine in doubtful Matters, altho' their Decisions shall appear to them to be an ERROR? If there cannot, there is an End of all Government in the Church; for such Absolute, Unlimited, such mere Authority, there is none given to Men over the Consciences of Men. There may be such a Power exercised over Mens Bodies, but their Souls cannot be thus ruled over by any Men whomsoever. But if Government, and Discipline, and Order may be carry'd on and preserv'd without the Exercise of such Authority as shall "oblige Men, " whatever they themselves think, though not to profess " what they do not believe, yet to forbear the Profession and " Publication of what they do believe, let them believe it of " never so great Importance:" then surely to deny or write against such Authority in the Church is not to subvert all Government and Discipline in the Church of CHRIST.

I. REASON and UNDERSTANDING is that Light, which He that lightens every Man that comes into the World, John i. 9. puts into the Mind of Man, to see and judge

judge thereby, what to *believe* and what to *do*. Now though we leave not Men wholly to their own *Reason*, yet must we leave them the Use of it, so far as is necessary to the *Assent* which Faith requires; and we leave it to them, not in Opposition to the *publick Judgement of the Church*, but to the *blind Obedience of an implicit Faith*, that sees no other Ground or Motive of Believing and Practising than because the Church so commands. If the Church of *Rome* impose the hard Condition on them that come over to her, (as *Nabash* the *Ammonite* on them of *Jabesh-Gilead*, that would come out to him, 1 Sam. xi. 2. to thrust out their Eye, the Eye of their spiritual Understanding by which they discern and judge of *spiritual Things revealed of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 13, 15. and only leave them the Eye of *Common-Sense* to discern what it is the Church doth practise or what it defines, without further enquiry about the Will of GOD, how consonant that Practice or Definition, that Worship or Belief is to it: If, I say, she can impose this hard Condition, we cannot, but must say:

THAT no Man can believe any Thing truly with such a free and full Assent as Faith requires, nor do any Thing in Worship or Practice of Life, with that Faith or due Persuasion of the Lawfulness of it, which the Apostle requires Rom. xiv. ult. unless he be convinced of it in his Judgment, as in the same Chap. v. 5. Let every One be fully persuaded in his own Mind; concluding by the due Use of his Reason, that it's GOD's revealed Will he should so do and believe. Nor can this be eluded by saying, it is sufficient for such a Persuasion, that a Man knows the Church saith so, and thereupon concludes, that GOD saith so: For there is more in the Apostle's saying, The spiritual Man judgeth all Things, 1 Cor. ii. 15. And the last Resolution or Stay of Faith is not upon the Church's saying so. Private Christians have their private Judgment or judgment of Discretion for themselves, which is in the discerning and receiving to themselves as the Will of GOD, what is delivered and propounded to them; for they must answer for themselves, and live by their own Faith, which cannot be without allowing them due Use of their Reason and Judgment, to see the Evidence of that to which they must assent.

II. THERE is not such a general Obscurity in Scripture, but that private Persons may read it with profit: Which both Scripture itself and all the Fathers exhort the

People to : Because what is *necessary to Life and Faith*, is for the most part *plainly set down* ; therefore it is called, *A Light to our Feet and Paths*, Psa. cxix. and to *make wise the Simple*, Psa. xix. 7. and St. Peter bids Christians *attend to the Word of prophecy as a Light shining in a dark Place*. 2 Epist. i. 19. — A Light if it be not put in a dark Lanthorn, or under a Bushel (as the Church of Rome serves the Scripture to hide it from the People) will shew itself: So will the Scripture, being a *Light* and a *Light shining*, as St. Peter said. Certainly it was the Apostle's Intent and Duty so to speak, and so to write as to be understood. And St. Peter notes but some *Places* in St. Paul's Epistles *hard to be understood which the Unlearned and Unstable wrest* — 2 Epist. ch. iii. Sure then those that are not *unlearned* and *unstable* but come with Minds and Endeavours answerable, may read with Profit, especially his Epistles, being for the most part not hard to be understood. Again, take the Scripture as a Rule of Direction, it argues that it must be Clear and Plain in what it is to direct us in. All Men give such Rules, as near as they can, *Evident* and *Clear* ; and shall we deny it to the Best of Rules, the Rule of GOD's making and giving, the Rule of greatest Concernment to us.

III. GOD's People are not left to themselves to seek out that revealed Will of GOD ; but He has appointed Guides and Pastors in his Church — to Propound and Demonstrate that Will of GOD out of his Word. To this End were *Pastors and Teachers* given, Eph. iv. *That we should not be carried away with every Wind of Doctrine*, ver. 14. These Guides and Pastors of the Church do Guide and Teach not *infallibly*, but *morally* by Way of *Doctrine* and *Persuasion*, or by *Manifestation of the Truth to every Man's Conscience*, as St. Paul saith, 2 Cor. iv. 2. For which Purpose they are to use the Means needful ; such as is Attention and Diligence in Search of the Scripture, Collation of Places, and observing the Connexions : Also *Sincerity* and *Impartiality* in the Collection or Deduction they make: also *Prayer* and *Devotion* for Assistance in the Work. The Apostle tells us *Heb. xiii. 17* that they *have the Rule over us*, but in another Place he adds the Limitation, *Not as having Dominion over your Faith*, 2 Cor. i. 24. and, *Not as Lords over God's Heritage*, saith St. Peter Ep. i. ch. v. 3. *As Ministers by whom ye believe*, 1 Cor. iii. 9. *as Helpers of your Joy*, 2 Cor. i. 24. *Ministers, Helpers, Guides* they are in the Way of Salvation : But as it is one thing for a Man to follow a Guide,

till

till he see apparent Danger, another Thing to be led by him blindfold : So it is one Thing to follow our Spiritual Guides with a *conditional Belief*, or Reservation to GOD's Word, yea and to follow them to a Mistrust of our own Judgment, or Knowledge we have of the Way ; another Thing to resign up Judgment and Belief to them, and put out that Light of Reason which GOD hath put in us, in order to our receiving Direction for the Way of Salvation.

IV. IN regard every particular Man is to give Account of himself, is to be saved by his own Faith, and perishes upon his own Score ; Men were not excused if seduced by their Prophets and Teachers, as *Isa. ix. 14, 15, 16. The Leaders of this People cause them to err, and they that are lead are destroyed* — Also, *Head and Tail, Rush and Branch*, both cut off, and *Ezek. xxxiii. 6. and 8. Those that perish through the Prophets default, their Blood notwithstanding is on their own Head.* Answerably, *Matth. xv. 14. They are not excused that blindly follow their Leaders, both fall into the Ditch.* The Romanists reject this as not applicable to the Guides of the Church, answering in Effect as the *Pharisees* (who also had chief Place in the Church) *are we also blind, Joh. ix.* And we may reply as our Saviour did ; *You say, we see, therefore your Sin remaineth ; therefore your Blindness is more incurable.*

V. OUR Saviour and His Apostles left Men the Use of their Reason and Judgment in discerning what is taught them in and by the Church. For they enjoyn the Use of it as a Duty, as when our Saviour bids, *Search the Scriptures, Joh. v. 39. And take Heed how you hear. Luke viii. 18. Beware of false Prophets, and by their Fruits ye shall know them, Matth. vii. 15. And beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees, Matth. xvi. 11. that is, their Doctrine ver. 12.* Now set against this last Place, that which our Saviour saith, *Matth. xxiii. 2. The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Chair, all therefore that they bid you observe that observe, and do.* How can these be reconciled (observe whatsoever they Teach, and beware of the Leaven of their Doctrine) without allowing the Judgment of Discretion in the Hearer ? So the Apostle, *Gal. i.* forbids the receiving of any other Gospel, though preach'd from Heaven by an Angel. How should the *Galatians* know a Difference betwixt the Gospel and Faith once deliver'd, and

any other new one, but by using Reason and Judgment. To the same Purpose, he bids, *Prove all Things, hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thess. v. 21. *Try the Spirits*, 1 Joh. iv. 1. The Romanists answer, That these Precepts of *proving* and *trying* are spoken to the *Guides* of the People. We say, that is true, to them chiefly spoken, and yet to the *People* too: To the *Guides* and *Pastors* in order to reforming and casting out Errors prevailing, (in which Respect we plead for Use of Reason and Judgment to be allowed, not to the *People* so much, but to their *Guides*) also in order to the keeping out Errors, which false Teachers would bring in to the seducing of the *People*: — But still that *Proving* and *Trying*, that *Taking heed*, belongs also to the *People*, and implies their Use of Reason and Judgment, not in order to reforming or judging in others; but in order to their own believing or receiving what is taught and propounded to them. The Apostle calls to them, *Judge what I say*, 1 Cor. x. 15. And *Judge in yourselves*, 1 Cor. xi. And *the spiritual Man judgeth all Things*, 1 Cor. ii. 15. He speaks of Things taught in the Church, and of the spiritual Man's judging them, in order to his own believing; to which Purpose St. John 1 Ep. ii. 27. *The Anointing shall teach you all Things*, viz. so as to understand all Things necessary to their Salvation. In Matters of *Faith* and *religious Worship*, we cannot submit to any Company of Men, by Resignation of our Judgment and Belief, or standing bound to receive for *Faith* and *Worship* all that they shall define and impose for such; for such Resignation gives to *Man*, what is due to GOD, and stands excluded by the Condition of the Authority which is not infallible, and also by the Condition of the Matter, (*Faith* and *Worship*) of high Concernment to our own Souls, and to be accounted for by ourselves; who therefore stand bound to make present and diligent Search for that Evidence and Demonstration from GOD's Word, upon which we may finally and securely stay our Judgments and Belief in such Matters,

VI. IT is possible that such as have chief Place in the Publick Judgment (*National* or *General*) may neglect their Duty (at least the *greater Number* of them to the overbearing of the *less*) and thro' Prejudice of *Faction*, or other *worldly Respects* may fail in determining and propounding the Truth, (for the Promise of guiding them is conditional upon performing Duty, and that is not always certain in the *greater Part*) to the

the Imposing of false Belief, and false Worship. Experience tells us, what they have proved that have been in chief Place, that have sat in *Moses Chair*, and in *St. Peter's*: How many Hereticks at several Times among the Popes? How a whole Succession of Monsters through the tenth Age? Of which *Bellarmino* complains, and *Baronius* cries out, *Quæ facies Rom. Ecclesiæ!* when infamous Strumpets disposed of Bishopricks, yea thrust their Paramours (*Amasios suos*) into *Peter's Chair*! What Cardinals then made? What Bishops then ordained by such Monsters? and *stertentibus omnibus*, all in a manner being asleep — so he. Experience also tells us, how gross Errors have prevailed over the Church, as for Example: The Millenary Belief so generally, that *Justin Martyr* (*contra Tryph.*) saith, "All that were in all Points, or thoroughly "Orthodox Christians held it." So also the giving of the Communion to Infants after Baptism, as necessary to their Salvation, generally held and practis'd in the whole Church for many Ages. And the Place of faithfull Souls out of Heaven till the Day of Judgment:

IT is not certain that they which meet in Councils are so gathered together, *viz.* in the Name of CHRIST; sometimes it is certain and notorious, that they are not; as in the second Council of *Ephesus*, a packed Faction prevailed to the advancing of the *Eutychian* Heresy; and in the *Romish* Councils for these later Ages, the papal Power and Faction hath manag'd and over-rul'd all: So apparently in their glorious Council of *Trent*, that it was often and openly complained of, while the Council was sitting, and the Decrees of that Council not received into *France* for about Forty Years after it was concluded. Can we say such Councils are gathered in the Name of CHRIST? Or that the Promise can belong to such, and the infallible Assistance of GOD's Spirit (which the *Romanists* pretend) can be given to such a Company of Men, so gathered together, so overswayed with factious Interests? Or to a Pope, be he what he will be for Person, so he be Pope? For such to say *Visum est Spiritui Sancto, & nobis* — It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, what wants it of blasphemous Arrogance? and what wants it of *Simon Magus's* Sin, to think the Holy Ghost can be bought with Money? Or bound to a Pope that hath bought his Chair and enters *Simoniacally*, or to a Company of Men, whose Votes in Council are purchased with Gold, or golden Hopes of Preferment; as it fared with a great Part of them that met at *Trent*, being either Titu-

lars,

lars, Pope's Pensioners, or bound to him upon like worldly Concernments.

BUT at the best, where there is not evident Cause of Exception, yet can there not be Certainty, that they which meet in Council, are so gathered in the Name of CHRIST, with such Minds, Purposes and Endeavours as above required, viz. *With Minds free from worldly Intents and Designs, and from all factious Engagements, seeking unfeignedly the Glory of GOD, and the Propagation of the true Catholick Faith; and therefore setting before them the only Infallible Rule of Faith and Truth GOD's WORD, attending to it with due Heed and Submission, and with Prayer (for that is express'd in the Text, to ask) for Assistance.* Now the Issue of the Promise depends upon Performance of the Conditions; of which Performance tho' we may have a great Presumption, in Regard of their Learning and Judgment, and their high Concernment, as being answerable for Mens Souls, (besides the Care and Respect that GOD hath towards His Church) yet can we not have such a Certainty, as *simply and absolutely* to ground Submission of Judgment and Belief upon it; and therefore we receive their Definitions concerning *Faith and Worship* not finally or chiefly upon the *Presumption* we have of their Performance, or Conformity to the Condition of the Promise, but upon the *Evidence* of that Conformity which their Definitions have to the Infallible Rule. It was the Care of St. Paul and of the true Apostles (and so it should be of all the Pastors of the Church) *by the Demonstration of the Truth, to commend themselves to every Man's Conscience, that they have not handled the Word of GOD deceitfully, 2 Cor. iv. 2.* Upon this Evidence or Demonstration of Truth, the Four first general Councils have been so generally submitted to, so readily received by all good Christians.

VII. REFORMATION of GOD's Worship, may be warrantably done without a foregoing Synodical Vote. Synods indeed are the most prudential and safe Way of determining Church-Affairs, where there is not just and apparent Cause of *fearing more Danger from the Persons which are to be convoked, and the Times in which they are to assemble.* To this Purpose sounds that known Complaint of Greg. Nazianzen, *That he saw no good End of Councils, which he spake not absolutely, but with respect to the Times and Persons as they stood then affected, by reason of the prevailing Faction of the Arians, who by their Number and Cunning made Advan-*

tage often of the Councils held in those Times. Now seeing the Office of Bishops and Pastors of the Church, as to this Point of Reformation, is *Directive*, either in or out of Synod, and the more convenient Way of the two for giving out that Direction, is by their Meeting and Consulting in Synod, therefore the Prince, whose Power or Office is *Imperative* and *Coactive* for Establishing by Laws and Penalties what is evidenced to him, hath great Reason to receive his Direction from the Pastors of the Church assembled in Synod. But he is not *simply* and *always* bound, to take his Direction thus, by any Law of GOD or Man; for if by the Law of GOD he stand bound to establish within his own Dominions whatsoever is evidenced to him by faithful Bishops and Learned Men of the Church, to be the Law of CHRIST, shall he not perform his known Duty, till the Vote of a Major-part of a Synod give him Leave to do it? The change of Religion for the worse is still charged upon the Evil Kings in the *Old Testament*, and the Reforming it again is recorded to the Praise of good Kings: Which shews this Obligation of Duty upon every Prince, and the Examples of *Hezekiah* and *Josiah*, who were *more forward* in the Reformation of GOD's *Worship* than the *Priests*, do warrant the forward Piety of our young *Josiah*, King *Edward*. And this is also approved by that which many Christian Emperors and Kings have, to their great Praise, done in the Business of Religion, without, or before the Calling of a Council, though not without the Counsel and Advice of faithful Bishops, and learned Men.

NEITHER can we say, The Sovereign Prince is bound in the way of Prudence always to receive his Direction from a Vote in Synod, especially when there is just Cause of Fear, as above said; but he may have greater Reason to take Advice from Persons free from the Exceptions of *Faction* and *Interests*, to which the *most* of them that should meet, are *apparently obnoxious*.

VIII. IF there were not Place for dissenting by the use of *private Judgment* (for some one Person must speak first in the discovering such Errors; some Guides and Pastors though of the *less Number* and *Place* shall detect the prevailing Errors, and preserve the Truth, and this by due use of *Reason* and *private Judgment*) there would be a Necessity of the Church's continuing in Error; but her Errors have been reformed: And he or they that spake in discovering the Untruth of them did

did it upon the Use of their private Judgment, examining the Belief and Practice of the Church, and shewing the Error of it.

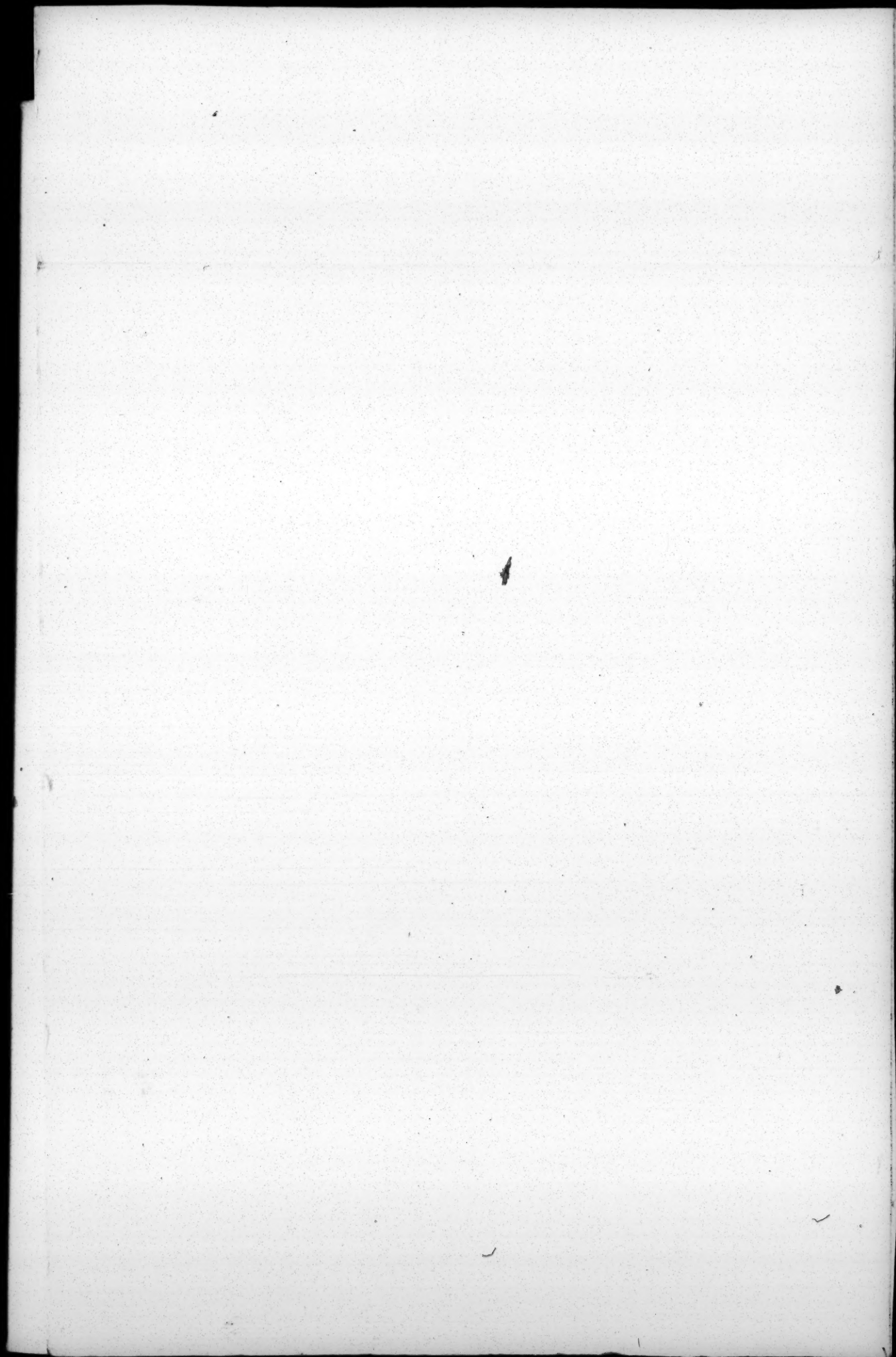
BUT what if the Church's Errors have been defin'd by any lawful General Council? Then no Man (will they, *the Papists*, say) ought to question them, or use his private Judgment against them. But then must we say, if any Thing be defined amiss, the Church must continue in Error; and an after General Council cannot amend it. But if Things before defined, may be corrected or revers'd by the like Authority; how can it come about but by the discovering of the former Error, and that upon the Use of *private Judgment*, examining the Definitions, and shewing the Error to the Church? And that which *Bellarmino* grants, *Nisi manifestissime constet errorem intolerabilem committi*, supposes such Error may be committed and discovered. But how can this latter come about, but upon the Use of private Judgment in Inferiours? And while the *Council of Trent* was not received in *France*, was it not upon the Use of their Judgment against that Council, which with the Romanists passeth for General.

Lastly, IF private Men for a peaceable dissenting in Judgment or Practice from the Visible Church (of which they were Members) in Points of high Concernment, for *Belief or Worship*, be censured and driven from the Communion of it; They are not for all that, *driven from the Communion of the Catholick Church*; but their Condition is not unlike the Case of those good Men which *St. Augustine* speaks of *Cap. 6. de vera Religi: Divine Providence*, says he, *suffers sometimes* (*Viros bonos per turbulenta seditiones carnalium hominum expelli de Congregatione Christiana*) *Good Men to be cast out of the Communion of the Visible Church, through the turbulent Seditions of carnal Men.* — And these, saith he, *-serving GOD in secret*, (*pater videns in occulto coronat*) *their Father which sees in secret, Crowns and Rewards.*

I SHALL be glad if the Publication of these Reasons be any Way instrumental towards composing those unhappy Differences which are at present among the Pastors of this Church, And am

SIR,

Yours, &c.



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